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EXHIBITION LECTURES.

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS

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Richard Lalor
HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN,

IN THE EXHIBITION PAVILION, CORK,

ON THE EVENING OF TUESDAY, 29TH JUNE, 1852,

ON THE OPENING OF

A COURSE OF LECTURES, ILLUSTRATIVE OF IRISH ART, INDUSTRY,
AND SCIENCE.

CORK :

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. The Executive Committee think it right to state, that for the statements of facts or opinions contained in the following course of Lectures, the Authors of the several papers alone are responsible.

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INAUGURAL ADDRESS

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HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF DUBLIN.

It is, I trust, sufficiently understood that it is not my purpose to deliver one of that course of lectures which it is proposed to have delivered in connexion with the Exhibition, but only to make a few prefatory observations as an introduction to those lectures which are about being delivered by persons more competent, in their respective departments, than myself. It had been arranged by the Committee that one of the proposed lectures should be delivered on this evening, merely prefaced by some introductory observations from me; but that arrangement has been altered for some reason, and the first lecture, of the course proposed to be delivered, will take place on another evening. But this, you will see, makes no essential difference in the character of what I have to say; for a preface is still a preface, though it should happen to be printed and bound up in a separate volume. I have not the slightest intention to deliver a lecture, but simply to offer some general remarks, as I was requested to do by the Committee.

The proposed lectures should be considered as emanating from—as the offspring of—the National Exhibition; and, in fact, may be considered as a subsidiary and necessary por-

tion of it. These lectures do not undertake or pretend to give a course of education in any one particular department, any more than the collection of manufactures and articles viewed this day, should be considered as a warehouse, rather than a sample of what nature and art were capable of producing in this country. Such an exhibition, I take it, would be unfinished and incomplete unless some specimens were also exhibited of what could be done, in the way of instruction, by those whom the country could produce to give that instruction to the nation. Of all the instruments which are exhibited in the collection I have inspected in the course of the day, there is none so important as a good instructor. The flax, growing in the field, is not more different from the finest and most finished cambric than an ignorant man is from a well informed man. The proposed lectures are not intended to furnish full instruction in any one department, but merely as a specimen of what may be done in the way of imparting information—to show what lectures can do to those who are disposed to resort to and profit by them.

The National Exhibition has not been got up, as far as I can observe and collect, from any spirit of rivalry or jealousy against the Great Exhibition in London last year—but it has been got up in a spirit of honest and laudable emulation; not to show how well Ireland can get on without England and the rest of the world, but to show how worthy Ireland is to be included in the industrious nations of the world, and how worthy it is to form a portion of the British empire. And as there has been no feeling of jealousy exhibited in getting up this Exhibition, so I hope no feeling of low narrow-mindedness or base jealousy will be excited in England against it. If the English should see as much to be admired as I have seen this day, I conceive the natural effect will be congratulation to the Irish, and increased emulation amongst the English. I think I may say that the

National Exhibition, if not more *admirable* than the Great Exhibition, may be called more *surprising*, considering the circumstances under which each was got up.

What I say respecting Ireland as a part of the British Empire—and my desire has always been to see Ireland considered a worthy member of the Empire—is no new sentiment with me, and has not been taken up for the present occasion, nor since my coming to this country; but, is the sentiment which my most intimate friends could bear witness of as being mine from the time I have been able to form an opinion on a public subject. It has always been my wish that Ireland should be considered as a really integral portion of the British empire, and as such admitted to take its place with all the others and not to be considered as a province or a dependency of the empire, but as much a part of it as Yorkshire or any other portion of the Kingdom. I may be mistaken as to what would conduce to the welfare of England and the welfare of this country; but, there is not an Englishman nor an Irishman who has more at heart the welfare of the Kingdom, or any portion of the British empire than I have. And it has always appeared to me—if any one thinks me mistaken, I trust he will, at all events, accord me credit for sincerity in what I say,—that the narrow policy of separating England from Ireland, and setting forth their interests as inimical and antagonistic, and exciting the feelings of the people against each other, savours of barbarism, and is in effect, bringing them back to the days of the Heptarchy. I would never join in the cry of “Ireland for the Irish;” nor would I join in the cry of “England for the English”—which is only the second part of the same tune. If you adopted such a plan, they would then have the cry of “Cork for Corkmen” and “Dublin for Dubliners,” and thus you would be narrowing yourselves into cities, and towns, and clans, until all would relapse into a state of semi-barbarism, such as is to be

found in New Zealand and Africa. I am confident that the prosperity of Ireland will always be reflected on England, and that the prosperity and wealth and tranquillity of the latter will reach the former. I have always considered the two countries as two brothers—the best and most useful friends when united ; but the bitterest and worst enemies when disunited. These are not sentiments taken up for the present occasion, but sentiments which I have always felt and expressed openly from the period I was first able to form and express an opinion.

Lectures, something of the same character, only of a more continuous and prolonged course, and having the character of being in connection with a more permanent institution, than those about being delivered in this hall, were established several years ago at Manchester and also at Edinburgh ; and on the establishment of those lectures, and of a library and museum, I was invited to attend the opening. I did attend at Manchester and subsequently at Edinburgh ; and on both occasions expressed my warm approbation of their proceedings, and a hearty wish for their success ; and for so doing, I and those other persons who had taken a part in the proceedings, were reviled and ridiculed, by a certain portion of the Press, with the bitterest derision. It is not for me to say how far that portion of the Press was actuated by a wish to repress and circumscribe the spread of education among the people ; but, for some reason or another—as I presume there was a reason for doing it—we were most bitterly reviled and maligned. Those who did so put forth grounds in justification of their conduct, which, as far as I could understand them resolved themselves into two reasons. First, they said, this was a plan for imparting knowledge, not necessarily connected with religion and morality, nor under the control or supervision of the teachers of morality and religion ; and as the lecturers were not under the control of spiritual teachers, the more able and

instructive these lecturers were, the more they would be enabled to corrupt the mind of the learner, and the more dangerous they might make him. The second objection was to what might be called "the dangers of smattering"—the dangers of "of a little learning." They said the people would be the worse for having a slight knowledge—"a little learning" imparted to them.

On those two objections I shall make a few observations.—The lectures which were established at Manchester and Edinburgh, five or six years ago, like those lectures that are about being established here, did not contain, as a portion of them, moral and religious instruction, and therefore they were represented as dangerous. Now, in all the works I have written I have warned men against the danger of neglecting a moral and religious education, and against any undue preponderance being given to secular instruction without a duly proportionate attention being devoted to morality and religion. And I pointed out that the same amount of moral and religious cultivation which would be sufficient for a very ignorant clown, should not be considered a fair proportion for those who had received a higher degree of secular cultivation. That which would be the tithe of a small produce should not be offered as tithe of a larger one. But you should remember that while these lectures are being delivered, there is no deficiency of religious and moral instruction elsewhere, be it good or bad. There are sermons to be heard from persons of all religious denominations, which are, in fact, lectures on religion and morality, from which persons may, if they so please, derive moral instruction; and it would be as improper if in those sermons allusion were made to agriculture, chemistry, or the fine arts, as if in lectures on chemistry, agriculture, or the fine arts, the lecturer were to inculcate morality and religion. As to any compulsory system of religious teaching I have always been opposed to it,

both on principle and on grounds of expediency. We have no right to force upon any person religious or moral instruction ; for, as Shakespere said of mercy, its quality

“ ——— is not strained.

It droppeth like the gentle rain from Heaven,
Upon the place beneath.”

But all we can do to provide against the danger of neglecting the moral and religious cultivation of the mind, is, to warn man of the danger of such neglect ; and when we have done that, we have done all we can do. It would be useless, and worse than useless, to force moral instruction on a person as a condition of his receiving a secular education.

But we will be told by some that “ they wish only secular education to be under the control of those who have the spiritual guidance of the persons receiving such secular education ;” that “ those spiritual directors should have a veto upon everything which has reference to the secular education ; because,” they add, “ the lecturer on geology might, in the course of his address, insinuate false and mischievous notions in regard to religion and morality ; and therefore the entire control of the secular education should be placed under the guidance and superintendence of the spiritual guides of the people.” Now, as to the danger in question, I will not deny that it is possible for a teacher of some branch of secular learning to introduce false religious notions, and mischievous and dangerous moral principles. But I do not think there is any adequate safeguard against such danger, except to warn men against it, and to tell them to teach merely geology, mathematics, chemistry, agriculture, &c., in their respective departments ; but, in so doing, to take care they do not insinuate anything against religious and moral principles. For if you go beyond this precaution, there is a danger on the opposite side. If you leave the teaching of geology and mathematics to

the spiritual teachers of the people you may find that these may make as great errors as the others, by teaching false philosophical principles. "What a different kind of danger" it may be said. "Suppose a man did imbibe some false notions of philosophy—how trifling is this in comparison with his imbibing false religious and dangerous moral principles." "May not a man," they continue, "be a good Christian although a bad chemist? May not a man be a good Christian although he believe the sun goes round the earth." Now this I hold to be altogether an erroneous view of the case. You will perceive on reflection the danger is nearly the same, and not less, but greater. False philosophical notions indeed conveyed by professors who are the spiritual teachers of the people, if given merely as their own private opinions, as individuals, and not as interwoven with their religious teaching, are no greater evil than if taught by any one else. But it is not so with errors in science when represented as connected with religion. Although errors in chemistry and physics are in themselves contemptible when compared with the danger of wrong notions in religion and morality, there is danger of persons being taught certain erroneous notions of philosophy *as a part of their religion*, and by that means having a lever placed under their religious principles which will upheave and overturn them. True, a man may be a good Christian and a moral man, though he believe the sun moves round the earth. But, suppose that man was taught, as a part of *divine revelation*, and an essential point of his faith, that the sun really does move round the earth, then, when it is demonstrated to him that such is not the fact, he thus is led to believe that he has got a system of wrong notions as his religious faith, and he will be inclined to doubt it all.

I will give an instance which came under my own knowledge in the discussion of a question of physical truth as connected with religious and moral truth. There was, some 20 years ago,

a reviewer, who, in a review of a work in the *Westminster Review*, contended it was impossible that any revelation could have been made to man, because, according to the reviewer, in the second book of Chronicles, it appeared from a description of the temple, that the Jews did not know that the diameter of a circle differed from a third of its circumference. The answer to this argument is simple. For, first, it was not clear that the Jews *were* ignorant of the fact that the diameter of a circle differed from a third part of its circumference ; and secondly, even if they were ignorant of that geometrical fact, it did not follow that they could not have had a revelation that the heavens and the earth were made by a Supreme Being. It is not clear that the Jews were ignorant of the geometrical truth ; and the reviewer's conclusions did not follow even if they were ignorant. We all speak of the rising and the setting of the sun. The reviewer himself would have spoken of the same ; and yet we all know that the sun does not rise or set. The reviewer certainly would not have hesitated to say—"go in a straight line from this place to that, and be sure you are there before sunset." And yet according to his own reasoning from so saying, he would appear to be ignorant of the globular form of the earth, as well as of the Copernican system of astronomy. How absurd and pedantic it would be to say—"go in a *geodesic* line from this place to that, and be sure you are there before that portion of the earth is withdrawn from the sun's rays."

But, now, take a different view of the case. Suppose a teacher of theology had taken up the above notion, and being a bad mathematician, had insisted that they were bound to take it as a part and parcel of the Christian revelation, that the diameter was treble the circumference, what would be the consequence ? Simply that a student learning Euclid would fancy he had got a mathematical demonstration of the falsity of the Bible.

All the security we *can* have from the dangers on both sides, is to put the people on their guard against them, and say, "let no person go beyond his own department." Look in the Scriptures for religious instruction ; and, above all, let the theologian be always warned to teach his people, that a true religion has nothing to fear, and can have nothing to fear, from a full and searching investigation of nature—that false and pretended religions may be overthrown from facts brought to light, but that true religion is confirmed by enlightenment and investigation. It comes from the Author of Nature, and He cannot contradict himself. Two great volumes are placed before us—the book of nature and the book of Revelation, and as they came from the same Author, they cannot contradict each other. We should learn to read them both aright.

Another objection which is urged against this system of lecturing, is in the words of the Poet—

" A little learning is a dangerous thing."

That is an objection frequently urged, and I acknowledge the existence of the danger. I admit that with a "little learning" people are likely to be puffed up with vanity—to consider themselves above laborious work—and to become discontented at not being honored as the very accomplished persons they consider themselves. I do not deny the danger. But the poet adds as a remedy—

" Drink deep or taste not."

I think on reflection you will perceive that both of these remedies "drink deep" and "taste not," are impossible. "drink deep"! How deep are they to go? Is not the most learned man, even in any department to which he may have completely devoted himself, extremely ignorant in reference to the subject itself? He may have gone very "deep" in comparison with some of his neighbours, but still

is he not very ignorant when his knowledge is compared with that which he does *not* know? Five centuries ago, a man went more “deep” than the generality, who could read. The gigantic telescope, which is such an honor to this country, has brought to light wonders, in astronomy, that go far beyond anything with which we were previously acquainted; showing that the astronomers who “drank deep,” three centuries ago, were mere children when compared to those who lived a century since, and that those again were children to those who have followed them. It is impossible to have more than a very “little learning” in comparison to what we have to remain ignorant of. As, in making a clearing in an American forest, the more trees you fell, the wider is the prospect of surrounding wood, so, the more we learn, the more we perceive of what is yet unlearned. A man may indeed attain a very great and a very “deep” degree of learning *in comparison of his neighbours*; but, is he, therefore, the *less* likely to be self-conceited and puffed up? But if by “drink deep” is meant, learn modesty, there cannot be a better admonition, or one in which I would more heartily concur.

I would, therefore, say, the first recommendation of the poet—“drink deep”—is impracticable. The other—“taste not”—that is to say, have no learning, is equally impossible. The most ignorant clown knows something; and knows something that is often dangerous. You will not find in the most remote part of Ireland, a peasant who does not know what money is; who does not know the difference between a penny and a half crown, and even between a half crown and gold. But it is possible that this same peasant may think that the rich are the cause of all the sufferings of the poor; and that if the rich were to be plundered of their property and massacred, the people would be better off. This shews the danger of a little knowledge; but now the

peasantry may learn a little more ; I am happy to say, in the class books of the National schools, they may learn that the rich are a benefit to their country, and that if they were destroyed, the country would be worse off than before. There is no one in this assembly, although I believe I am surrounded by persons of erudition and high attainments, who is not with respect to many branches of knowledge—in the perilous position of having a “little learning.” I suppose that although not many of you are profound agriculturists, you all know the difference between a crop of turnips and a crop of oats. Although there may not be a dozen chemists in the room, I am sure you all could tell the difference between salts and sugar. And it is very possible, and also very useful, to have that slight smattering of chemistry which will enable one to distinguish from the salts used in medicine, the oxalic acid, with which, through mistake, several persons have been poisoned. Again, without being an eminent botanist, a person may know—what it is most important to know—the difference between cherries and the berries of the deadly Night-shade ; the want of which knowledge has cost many lives.

Again, there is no one present, even of those who are not profound politicians, who is not aware that we have rulers ; and is it not proper that he should understand that government is necessary to preserve our lives and property ? Is he likely to be worse subject for knowing that ? That depends very much on the kind of government you wish to establish. If you wish to establish an unjust and despotic government—or, if you wish to set up a false religion,—then it would be advisable to avoid the danger of enlightening the people. But if you wish to maintain a good government, the more the people understand the advantages of good government, the more they will respect it ; and the more they know of true religion, the more they will value it.

There is nothing more general among uneducated people

than a disposition to Socialism, and yet nothing more injurious to their own welfare. An equalization of wages would be most injurious to themselves, for it would, at once, destroy all emulation,—all motives for the acquisition of skill, and for superior industry, would be removed. All the manufactures in the Exhibition would be utterly destroyed by the equalization of wages.

Now it is but a *little* knowledge of political economy that is needed for the removal of this error; but that little is highly useful.

Again, every one knows, no matter how ignorant of medicine, that there is such a thing as disease. But as an instance of the impossibility of the “taste not” recommendation of the poet, I will mention a fact, which perhaps is known to you all. When the cholera broke out in Poland, the peasantry of that country took it into their heads that the nobles were poisoning them in order to clear the country of them; they believed the rich to be the authors of that terrible disease; and the consequence was that the peasantry rose in masses, broke into the houses of the nobility, and finding some chloride of lime, which had been used for the purpose of disinfecting, they took it for the poison which had caused the disease, and they murdered them. Now, that was the sort of a “little learning” which was very dangerous.

Again, you cannot prevent people from believing that there is some superhuman Being who has an interest in human affairs. Some clowns in the Weald of Kent, who had been kept as much as possible on the “taste not” system, left in a state of gross ignorance,—yet believed that the Deity did impart special powers to certain men: and that belief, coupled with excessive stupidity, led them to take an insane fanatic for a prophet. In this case, this “little learning” actually caused an insurrection in his favour, in order to make him king, priest and prophet of the British empire; and many lives

were sacrificed before this insane insurrection was put down. If a "little learning" is a "dangerous thing," you will have to keep people in a perfect state of idiocy in order to avoid that danger. I would, therefore, say that both the recommendations of the poet are impracticable.

The question arises what are we to do? Simply, to impress upon all people to labour to *know how little* their learning is; how little in comparison to what they remain ignorant of, they know. And the more they are taught, the less likely they will be to overrate or mistake the character of their learning. Other things being equal, the more widely knowledge is diffused among mankind, the less danger there is of an ill-use being made of it. For what is more mischievous to the tranquillity of a country than a clever, unprincipled, "patriot" demagogue, who makes use of a number of ignorant and uncultivated people as his tools. He gets the people to believe in him as a patriot, a guide, perhaps a prophet, and they will do anything—commit any extravagances that he may direct. Who ever heard of an *educated* rabble? Who ever heard of such a thing as a riotous mob consisting of men of cultivated minds? Such a thing is impossible; for each would be thinking for himself, and all would be generals. The more widely, therefore, you diffuse intellectual culture, the greater is your chance of a peaceable, and well ordered community. A little light is only dangerous to those who walk boldly on in the twilight—to those who do not see where they tread. But, I would say, seek not to remedy the danger by blinding the eyes.

Some persons, however, are not so much afraid of those who have but a little knowledge, as of what are called smatterers;—persons who are puffed up on account of their having learnt certain hard words—certain scientific and technical terms: from having attended lectures on what they have been pleased to term the various "ologies"—geology, biology, chronology,

ornithology—which enable the smatterers to move along in society, as if they were well informed on all the “ologies.” I admit this danger too, and have often pointed it out. But there is another danger—that of a scorn for all science,—for all systematic knowledge, combined with a self-sufficient confidence in what is called common sense and experience. And this danger, though not so often pointed out, is as great, if not greater than that to which I have alluded, and far more hopeless. There are men who depend on “their experience” and their “common sense” for everything—who are continually obtruding what may be called the pedantry of their “experience” and their “common sense” on the most abstruse subjects. They meet all scientific and logical argument with “common sense tells me I am right”—and, “my every day’s experience confirms me in the opinion I have formed.” If they are spoken to of Political Economy, they will immediately reply—“Ah, I know nothing of the *dreams* of Political Economy” (this is the very phrase I have heard used)—I never studied it—I never troubled myself about it ; but there are some points upon which I have made up my mind, such as the question of Free Trade and Protection and Poor Laws.’ ‘I do not profess’—a man will perhaps say—to know anything of Medicine, or Pharmacy, or Anatomy, or any of those things ; but I know by experience that so and so is wholesome for sick people.”

In former times men knew by experience that the earth stands still, and the sun rises and sets. Common sense taught them, that there could be no antipodes, since men could not stand with their heads downwards, like flies on the ceiling. Experience taught the King of Bantam that water can never become solid. And—to come to the case of human affairs—the experience and common sense of the most intelligent of the Roman historians, Tacitus, taught him that for a mixed government to be established, combining the elements of

Royalty, aristocracy and democracy would be next to impossible ; and that if it were established, it must speedily be dissolved. Yet had he lived to the present day, he would have learned that the establishment and continuance of such a form of government was not impossible. So much for experience ! The experience of some persons resembles the learning of a man who has turned over the pages of a great many books without ever having learned to read : and their so-called common-sense is often in reality, nothing else than common prejudice.

We may rest assured then, that those who affect to dread and despise what they call a smattering of science, and trust to experience and common-sense, have no security against error, or against presumptuous confidence in error, if they are deficient in real sound judgment and in modesty ; and *with* these qualities, no one will be in danger of self-sufficiency and pedantry from the acquisition of scientific truth, be it much or little.

Be not deterred therefore, I would say, by the dread of being called smatterers, from seeking a little knowledge where more is not within your reach : only take care not to over-estimate your knowledge, be it small or great.

These Lectures will never, I am convinced, deter any one from reading, and from studying systematically what he would, but for these Lectures, have so studied. They are more likely to incite some to read and inquire concerning subjects to which they might otherwise have never given a thought. And to all, the little knowledge they may impart may prove useful in various ways, and not least in giving them some notion of the vast amount remaining behind of knowledge which they have *not* acquired.

* * * The Lecture Committee feel bound in justice to the author, to state, that the preceding pages, which have been transcribed with some important corrections from the reports of the local press, afford still an incomplete notion of his Grace's Inaugural Address. Much valuable matter was omitted by the Reporters, and his Grace's more pressing avocations have prevented him from supplying the omissions, as well as from correcting the style of what is preserved. A special Reporter has been engaged for such of the subsequent Lecturers as may not furnish the Committee with an authorized manuscript.



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